

Who Can Order and Interpret Laboratory Tests?

by Gail Neuenschwander

A common question that is received by the Office of Laboratory Quality Assurance is "Who can order a laboratory test in Washington State?" Laboratories get requests for testing from a wide range of provider types. In addition, more and more consumers are calling laboratories and requesting testing on themselves.

The federal Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988 (CLIA) state that laboratory tests can only be performed when there is a written request from an "authorized person". The definition of "authorized person" is left up to the individual states. In Washington, the Medical Test Site Rule, WAC 246-338-010(2), defines "authorized person" as "any individual allowed by Washington State law or rule to order tests or receive test results". No other state law or rule specifically elaborates on "authorized person" in regard to ordering of clinical laboratory tests. However, the scope of practice for licensed health professionals determines whether or not they can order and interpret laboratory tests.

Since there is no specific law prohibiting an individual from ordering a test on themselves or receiving the test results, a laboratory may set their own policies on whether or not they will accept test orders from individuals. In setting such policies, the laboratory needs to consider other state laws regarding confidentiality issues and requirements for counseling patients (*e.g.*, HIV

testing). In addition, other regulations might apply for the facility, such as hospital rules that stipulate that patient services must be provided in accordance with a written order or protocol by an authorized practitioner. If a laboratory prefers not to perform tests for, or provide results to a private individual, it should establish a written policy, in consultation with its legal counsel, on this issue.

Page 3 has a list of health professions regulated by the Department of Health. The list addresses whether they can order laboratory tests and receive and interpret results for purposes of diagnosis and treatment. Specific questions regarding this list can be addressed to Todd Henry, Department of Health, Health Professions Quality Assurance (phone: 360-236-4984; e-mail: todd.henry@doh.wa.gov).

continued on page 3

Inside This Issue

- 2 Responding to Chemical Incidents
- 3 Who Can Order Lab Tests, cont'd
- 4 Proficiency Testing 2005/Calendar of Events

Practice Guidelines

The following practice guidelines have been developed by the Clinical Laboratory Advisory Council. They can be accessed at the following website:
www.doh.wa.gov/lqa.htm

Anemia	Lipid Screening
ANA	Point-of-Care Testing
Bioterrorism Event Mgmt	PSA
Bleeding Disorders	Rash Illness
Chlamydia	Red Cell Transfusion
Diabetes	Renal Disease
Group A Strep Pharyngitis	STD
Hepatitis	Thyroid
HIV	Tuberculosis
Infectious Diarrhea	Urinalysis
Intestinal Parasites	Wellness

Responding To Chemical Incidents

by Catherine Franklin, PhD, DOH/PHL

The Washington State Public Health Laboratories (PHL) has moved forward in the realm of major chemical incident preparedness and response. Chemical incidents (CI) include acts of chemical terrorism (CT) and major accidental releases of an unknown chemical or chemicals. The personnel currently involved in developing state testing preparedness and their primary tasks are described below. All the team members participate in the evaluation of current CT and CI analytic capacity throughout the state. This program will also be identifying other laboratories that could provide surge capacity testing in the event a chemical incident would overwhelm the testing capacity at the PHL.

The Team Leader and Response Coordinator serve as advisors to the Washington State Public Health Laboratories Director, Dr. Romesh Gautam, and other public health and environmental officials. They also are responsible for team administration and the development of protocols for responding to chemical events.

The two CI Response Chemists and the Laboratory Program Advisor are the technical experts for the chemical incidence response program at the PHL. The

two chemists are in the process of completing method implementation and proficiency testing on the newly acquired Agilent GC/MS with Gerstel Headspace analyzer and ELAN ICP-MS. Their duties include: performing chemical analyses on specimens for heavy metals, cyanide, and Lewisites (an arsenical). The analytical program is expected to expand to include other analytes of interest. The Lab Program Advisor, who is also a chemist, is primarily responsible for arranging, conducting and participating in training programs for clinical laboratories, local health jurisdictions, law enforcement and first responders in regards to specimen/sample collection, handling, and transport.

Protocols for the packaging, shipping and transport of clinical CI diagnostic specimens have been incorporated into the PHL Packaging and Shipping of Infectious Substances course. The next courses are scheduled for September 22 and December 7, 2004, at the PHL in Shoreline. Other courses will be added as additional training sites are secured. You can check out the PHL Training Program's course calendar online at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/PHL/train.htm>.

For more information about the Public Health Laboratories' role in responding to chemical terrorism contact Cate Franklin at (206) 361-2922, or send an email to Catherine.Franklin@doh.wa.gov.

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Website addresses:

DOH home page: <http://www.doh.wa.gov>

LQA home page: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/lqa.htm>

PHL home page:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/PHL/default.htm>

11th Annual Clinical Laboratory Conference

November 8, 2004
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Seattle Marriott Hotel at SeaTac
International Airport

If you have not received a copy of the program, contact Leonard Kargacin at (206) 361-2804 or by e-mail at leonard.kargacin@doh.wa.gov.

DOH Health Professions Quality Assurance Regulated Health Professions

RCW	Profession	Who can order lab tests for purposes of diagnosis for decisions regarding treatment?	Who can receive and interpret results from lab tests for purposes of diagnosis for decisions regarding treatment?
18.06	Acupuncture	no	no
18.79	Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.35	Audiologist	no	no
18.205	Chemical Dependency Professionals	no	no
18.25	Chiropractor	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.25	Chiropractic X-Ray Technician	no	no
18.19	Counselor	no	no
18.29	Dental Hygienist	no	no
18.32	Dentist	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.30	Denturist	no	no
18.138	Dietitian	no	no
18.34	Dispensing Optician	no	no
18.135	Health Care Assistant	no	no
18.35	Hearing Instrument Fitter/Dispenser	no	no
18.19	Hypnotherapist	no	no
18.79	Licensed Practical Nurse	no**	no**
18.225	Marriage & Family Therapist	no	no
18.108	Massage	no	no
18.225	Mental Health Counselor	no	no
18.50	Midwife	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.36A	Naturopath	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.88A	Nursing Assistant	no	no
18.52	Nursing Home Administrator	no	no
18.52C	Nursing Pool Operator	no	no
18.79	Nursing Technician	no	no
18.138	Nutritionist	no	no
18.59	Occupational Therapist	no	no
18.59	Occupational Therapist Assistant	no	no
18.55	Ocularist	no	no
18.53,18.54	Optometrist	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.200	Orthotics/Prosthetics	no	no
18.57	Osteopathic Physician & Surgeon	yes	yes
18.57A	Osteopathic Physician Assistant	yes****	yes****
18.64,18.64A	Pharmacies & Other Pharmaceutical Firms	no	no
18.64	Pharmacist	yes***	yes***
18.64,18.64A	Pharmacy Assistant	no	no
18.64	Pharmacy Interns	no	no
18.64,18.64A	Pharmacy Technician	no	no
18.74	Physical Therapist	no	no
18.71	Physician	yes	yes
18.71A	Physician Assistant	yes****	yes****
18.22	Podiatrist	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.83	Psychologist	no	no
18.84	Radiological Technician	no	no
18.230	Recreational Therapy	no	no
18.79	Registered Nurse	no**	no**
18.89	Respiratory Care Practitioner	no	no
18.155	Sex Offender Treatment Provider		
	Affiliate/Fully Certified	no	no
18.225	Social Worker	no	no
	Advanced Clinical/Independent	no	no
18.35	Speech Language Pathologist	no	no
18.215	Surgical Technologist	no	no
18.92	Veterinarian	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.92	Veterinarian Medical Clerk	no	no
18.92	Veterinary Technician	no	no
18.84	X-Ray Technician	no	no

*May only order certain lab tests within their scope of practice. If questions arise, please contact Todd Henry at the Department of Health, Health Professions Quality Assurance (phone: 360-236-4984; e-mail: todd.henry@doh.wa.gov).

**RNs and LPNs may not independently order lab tests, however, they are expected to recognize abnormal values and to notify the physician who ordered the test. Some facilities have protocols or standing orders for selected groups of patients which include lab tests that should be automatically ordered upon admission. In those cases, RNs may implement the standard order for lab tests.

***Pharmacists may order tests to monitor and evaluate.

****Physician assistants may order lab tests allowed under their supervision agreement with their supervising physician

Proficiency Testing 2005

- ✓ Enroll between now and December 2004 to be sure you will receive PT samples in 2005.
- ✓ Shop around for prices and test groups to meet your PT needs. Enroll in more than one company if necessary to cover all testing.
- ✓ Be sure that you include your MTS license number and CLIA number on your PT enrollment form.
- ✓ Be sure to check the box to release PT results to the Washington State Department of Health/Laboratory Quality Assurance.

For answers to your PT questions, go to the LQA website at www.doh.wa.gov/lqa.htm or call Leonard Kargacin at (206) 361-2804.

Calendar of Events

PHL Training Classes:

(<http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/PHL/train.htm>)

Basic Urine Sediments

October 13	Shoreline
October 14	Shoreline

Northwest Medical Laboratory Symposium

October 20-23	Portland
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11th Annual Clinical Laboratory Conference

November 8	Seattle
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2005 WSSCLS/NWSSAMT Spring Meeting

April 28-30, 2005	Spokane
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Contact information for the events listed above can be found on page 2. The Calendar of Events is a list of upcoming conferences, deadlines, and other dates of interest to the clinical laboratory community. If you have events that you would like to have included, please mail them to ELABORATIONS at the address on page 2. Information must be received at least one month before the scheduled event. The editor reserves the right to make final decisions on inclusion.